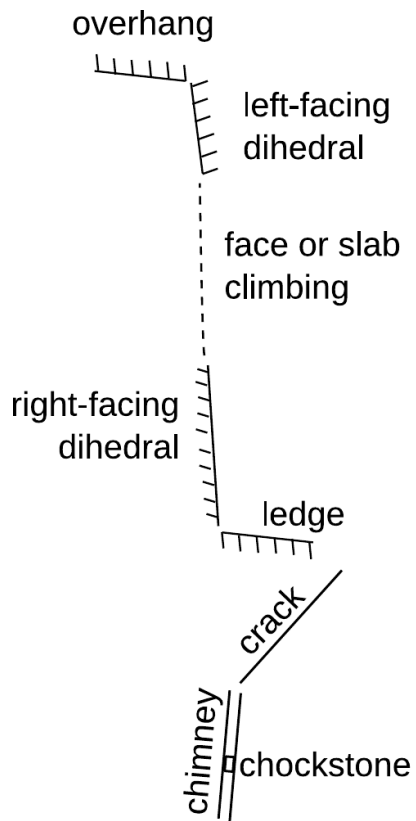


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Key to Symbols



× bolt

p fixed piton

OW off width

LB layback

SB sling belay, i.e.
hanging belay

① belay at the top of
the first pitch

○
opt optional belay

○ start of the climb,
if not obvious

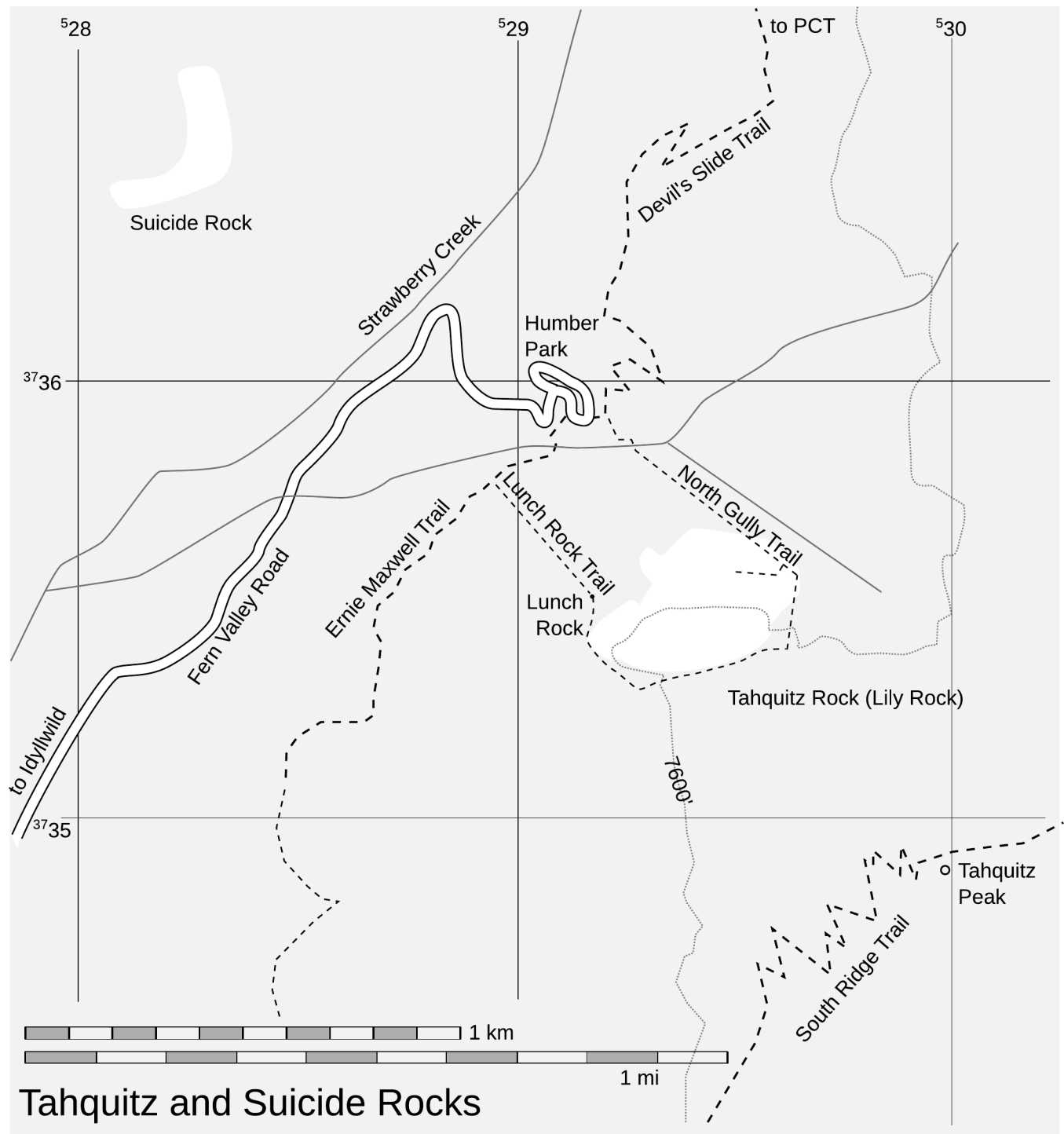


trough



arete

Map of Fern Valley, Tahquitz and Suicide Rocks



Weather and Climbing Season

Climbing season is usually from the end of March to around Thanksgiving. Often in early spring there will be snow piled up at the bases of climbs, but the rock itself will be snow-free. For most of the summer, the forecast is for a 20% chance of showers. Waiting for the number to go to 0% could mean not climbing all summer.

If checking the weather forecast for Idyllwild, keep in mind that the town is at 5400', while the summit of Tahquitz Rock is at 7973'. As a rule of thumb, temperatures on north-facing routes will feel colder by 20 degrees F than the forecast in Idyllwild. A forecast for the same elevation and area, including wind chill, is available at www.mountain-forecast.com/peaks/Jean-Peak/forecasts/2500.

Ratings

Historical

The Yosemite Decimal System originated at Tahquitz, and the following climbs were used as the standards to define the scale. For each climb, I've also listed the consensus rating from Mountainproject (in 2015), which shows that there has been quite a bit of inflation in the ratings over the years, mainly at the low end of the scale — nobody wants to say they climb 5.0 these days.

Historical definition of the YDS, and inflation of ratings

5.0	The Trough	FA 1936	modern 5.4
5.1	Fingertip Traverse	FA 1936	modern 5.4
5.2	Frightful Variation of the Trough	FA 1944	modern 5.2
5.3	East Lark	FA 1950	modern 5.5
5.4	Angel's Fright	FA 1936	modern 5.5
5.5	Ski Tracks	FA 1947, 1957	modern 5.6, 5.9
5.6	Sahara Terror	FA 1942	modern 5.7
5.7	Fingertrip	FA 1946	modern 5.7
5.8	Mechanic's Route	FA 1937	modern 5.8R
5.9	Open Book	FFA 1952	modern 5.9

Evaluating ratings from a guidebook

When depending on a guidebook for information about the difficulty of a climb, take into account both the popularity of the climb and the date of its first ascent. Old and lesser-known climbs often retain their historical ratings, which can be extremely sandbagged by modern standards.

For example, Summit magazine did a big spread on Tahquitz in 1960, which you can find scans of online. They describe Northeast Farce as 5.3 and White Maiden's Walkway as 5.1. Having done these two climbs, I would agree that Northeast Farce is a couple of grades harder than the Maiden. But the 2001 edition of the Vogel-Gaines guidebook rates these climbs as 5.3 and 5.4, respectively — as if the Maiden were the *harder* climb. What has probably happened is that because the Maiden is one of the most popular climbs on the rock, there has been pressure to inflate its rating. Since almost nobody does Northeast Farce, it retains the rating that was assigned when it was first climbed in 1954.

Another good example of this phenomenon is two obscure climbs on the inaccessible south face of Suicide Rock, named Minor and Spring Cleaning. The first ascent of Minor is lost in the mists of time, while Spring Cleaning had its FA in 1970. Several people who I've done these climbs with agree that they are equal in difficulty, but Vogel and Gaines list them as 5.1 and 5.6.

Descent routes

Friction descent

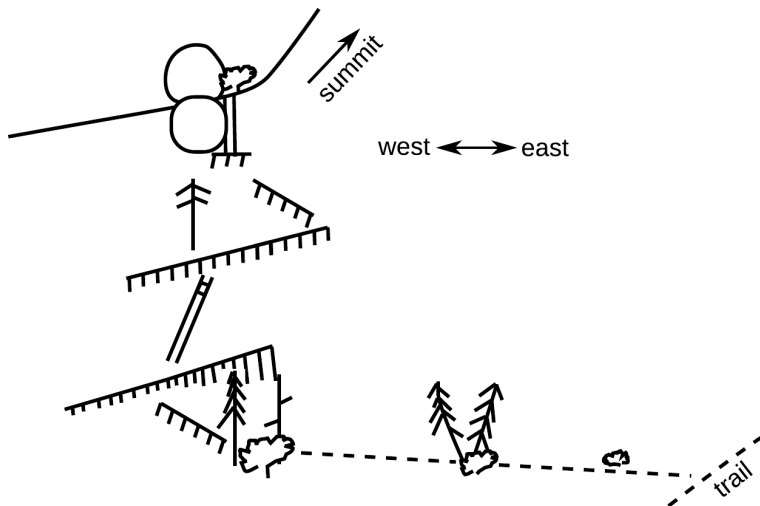
This is the class 3 standard descent for routes that end on the low western shoulder of the rock. Most of these routes end below the friction descent, but some, such as White Maiden's Walkaway, end above it. People have been known to get lost or in trouble on this descent, and some people don't feel comfortable doing it unroped. An alternative is always to go up and over the top of the rock, and then down either the north gully or the climber's trail on the south side of the rock.

Locate the house-sized boulder near the top of Tahquitz Rock's western shoulder, perched above the south side of the rock. Pass around the boulder on either the east or the west side, and go to the east side of the boulder. Insert into a short vertical chimney with one wall formed by a second, lower boulder. The exit at the bottom of the chimney is a big step onto a sloping ledge. This move can be done either by hugging the back wall and stepping down to a tree or by hanging your butt farther out in the wind and feeling for an undercling on the right.

Go down a ramp to the east, then follow a ledge west to a tree. Using a chock-stone for stability, insert into a diagonal chimney. At the bottom of the chimney, take a ledge down to the east.

The remainder of the route is a traverse passing through two wooded islands in the slabs. Each of these islands has two tall pine trees and some oak scrub. One of the trees in the first island is dead. The pine trees in the second island are a double tree. In the first island, pass directly through the grotto formed by the oaks.

Continue traversing across exposed slabs until you reach the dirt.



Return to Lunch Rock on a use trail. This trail can become indistinct in spots, and it is easy to be tempted into false alternatives that lead into dense brush. The correct trail runs parallel to and just a few feet left of the edge of the exposed granite. In most places the edge of the granite means the base of the rock wall, but in two spots it means the edge of some low-angle slabs. Stay off of these slabs, one set of which lies below the friction descent and another near the bottom of the Ski Tracks.

After passing the second set of slabs, continue around the corner and back to Lunch Rock.

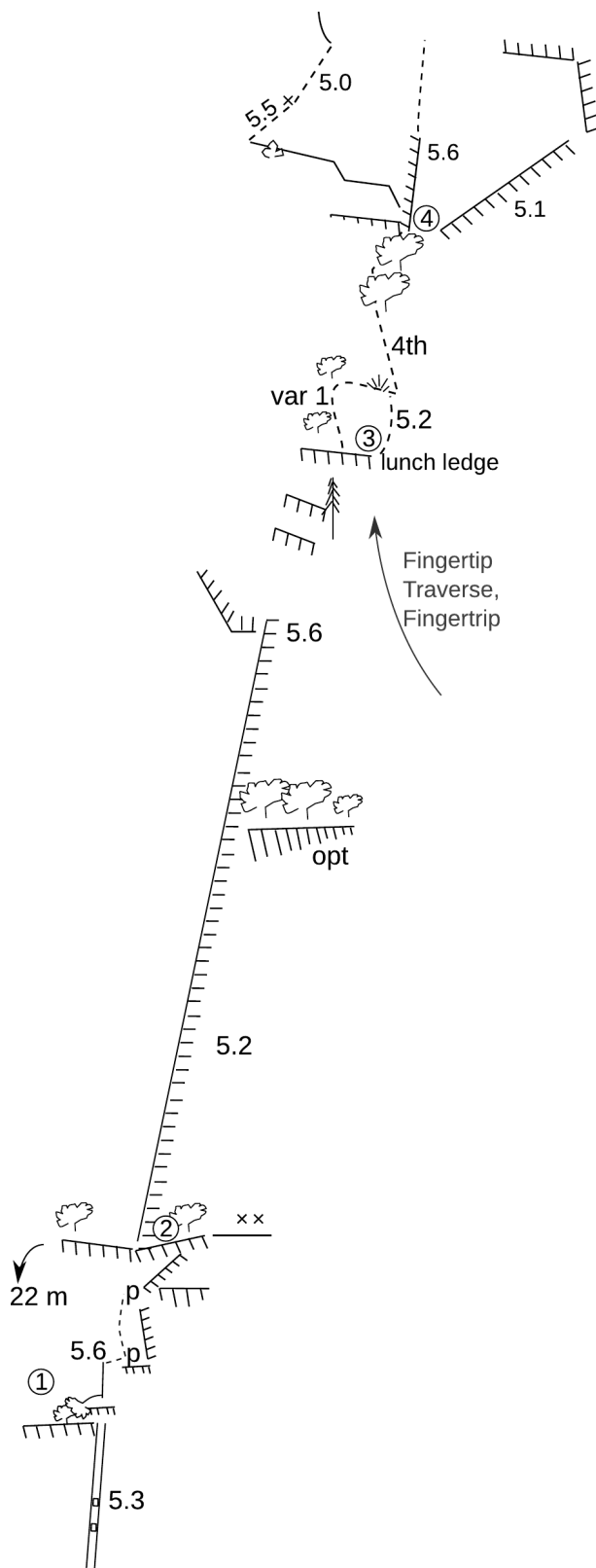
North gully descent

This descent route is used by climbs that end near the top of the rock or to its east. If coming down from the summit, scramble down class 3 rock to the saddle lying between the summit of Tahquitz Rock and Tahquitz Peak. However, most of the climbing routes that use this descent end below and to the east of

the summit, and for these routes the traverse to the saddle is no more than class 2.

Having reached the saddle, turn left down a steep, rough trail, then continue down slabs on the right. Class 2. Get back on the use trail, which gradually becomes more obvious and well maintained. Continue to the upper parking lot at Humber Park.

Angel's Fright (5.5)



This short and popular climb was the original definition of 5.4 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. The name is a pun on Angels Flight in LA. Most of the climb follows a long, uniform left-facing dihedral (P3), which is prominently visible from Humber Park. Nearly all of the climbing is easy 5th class, but two short sections are harder. The start is almost directly above Lunch Rock. Pro to 2". FA 1936, Jim Smith and William Rice.

P1. A wide chimney with a crack on the right that starts as wide hands and then becomes narrower. The start is made easier by trusting the firmly lodged first chock-stone. This pitch basically climbs like a crack, with the left wall of the chimney providing some helpful opportunities for extra friction but also adding some awkwardness. Strenuous but straightforward to climb and protect. Many people link P1 with P2. 5.3

P2. This short pitch consists of balancy, steep face climbing with possibly bewildering routefinding. Start up a ragged crack, then exit right to a small ledge with a fixed pin. Move back left and continue to a second piton, which is in bad condition and starting to split in half. Climb to the right up a ramp to a big belay ledge with two trees. 5.6

P3. Cruise up the big dihedral that forms the backbone of the climb. A finger-width crack runs along the wall. Most of the climbing is easy 5th class, but at the end a steep 5.6 headwall stands between you and a series of ledges leading up to Lunch Ledge. Here the climb joins up with Fingertip Traverse and Fingertrip. 5.5 m

P4. Climb up around a corner to the right and head up (5.2). Continue up fourth-class terrain.

Var 1: Climb up from the middle/left of the ledge, surmounting all the steps before traversing right. This variation creates problems with rope drag, especially if linking pitches 4 and 5. Avoiding rope drag may require back-cleaning or not placing protection. 4th class

P5. Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-0.5" cams. (Do not follow the ramp lower down.) A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

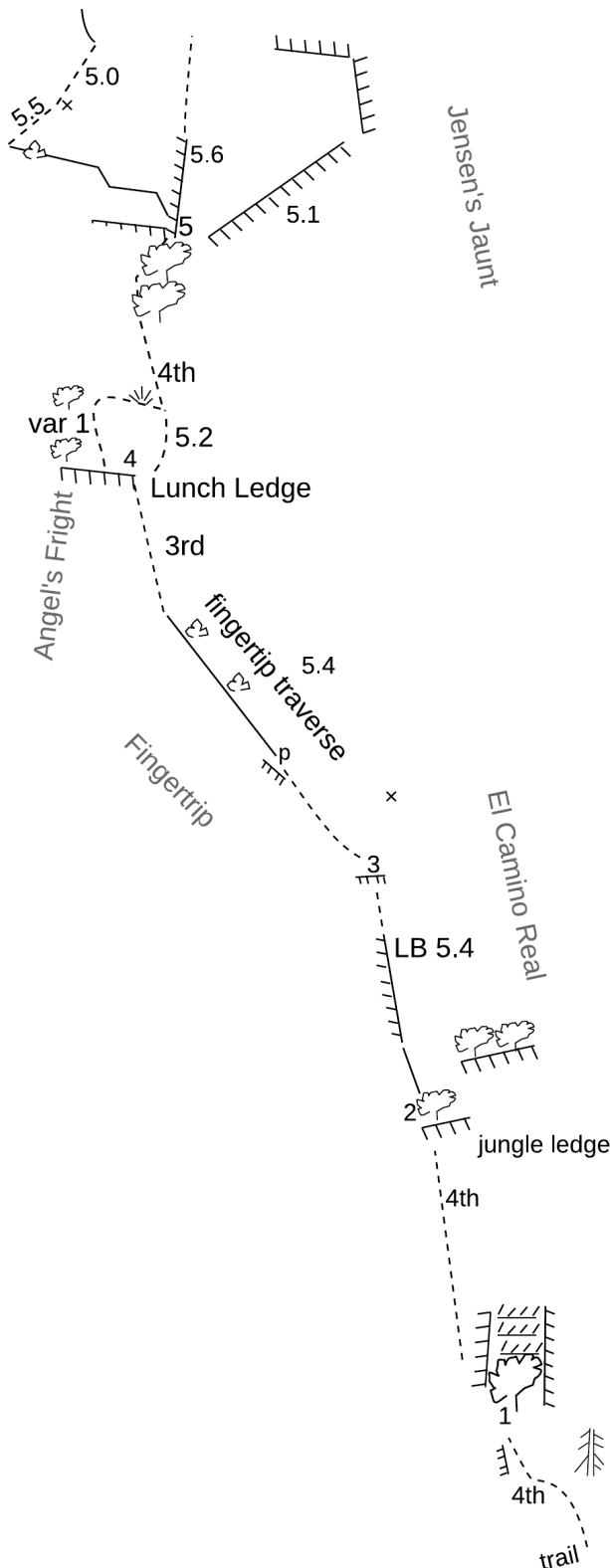
Var 1: Head right into a 5.1 gully, then turn left at an overhang.

Var 2: Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Fingertip Traverse (5.4)



An easy Tahquitz classic, this was the original climb used to define 5.1 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. Much of the climbing is 4th or easy 5th class, but the namesake traverse is more like 5.4 by modern standards, as are the P3 layback and P6 slab. Hike up to Lunch Rock and then head to the right along the trail. The first pitch starts directly from the trail, near a truncated tree, with the first belay easily visible. It will be convenient to have plenty of small cams. Pro to 2". FA 1936, Jim Smith, Bob Brinton, Arthur Johnson, and William Rice.

P1. Scramble up to a large double oak tree in an alcove, the infamous "ant tree." Anchor at the lower part of the tree to avoid stirring up the ants. 30 m, 4th class.

P2. Move up the left side of the alcove's left wall, where it is shortest, stemming against the opposite wall and then against two branches of the upper tree. Avoid the main trunk to keep from stirring up the ants. The committing move onto the rock can be protected by slinging branches and also with a 0.3" cam (blue Metolius) in a small finger crack. Continue up easy terrain. 30 m, 4th and easy 5th class except for the move out of the tree.

Var 1: Instead of using the tree, climb the hand crack in the broken overhang at the back of the alcove. Protect by reaching up to place a 2" cam. (I haven't tried this or seen anyone do it.)

P3. Climb a right-facing dihedral with good protection and stances. Near the top of the dihedral, a 10-foot section requires laybacking (5.4). Pro now becomes scarce, but there is a good placement for a 0.75" cam (green C4) immediately on exiting the layback. Belay at a tiny ledge on a slab (nuts). 30 m

P4. Go around a corner to the left. One of a pair of old fixed pins broke off in 2018, so the other is probably ready to go as well. Traverse along a finger-width crack, smearing on the sloping face below, 5.4. Protect using the trees and active pro 1-2" and smaller. Continue up 3rd-class terrain to Lunch Ledge (gear belay). Here the route joins up with Angel's Fright and Fingertip. 40 m

P5. Climb up around a corner to the right and head up (5.2). Continue up fourth-class terrain.

Var 1: Climb up from the middle/left of the ledge, surmounting all the steps before traversing right. This variation creates problems with rope drag, especially if linking pitches 5 and 6. Avoiding rope drag may require back-cleaning or not placing protection. 4th class

P6. Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-0.5" cams. (Do not follow the ramp lower down.) A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

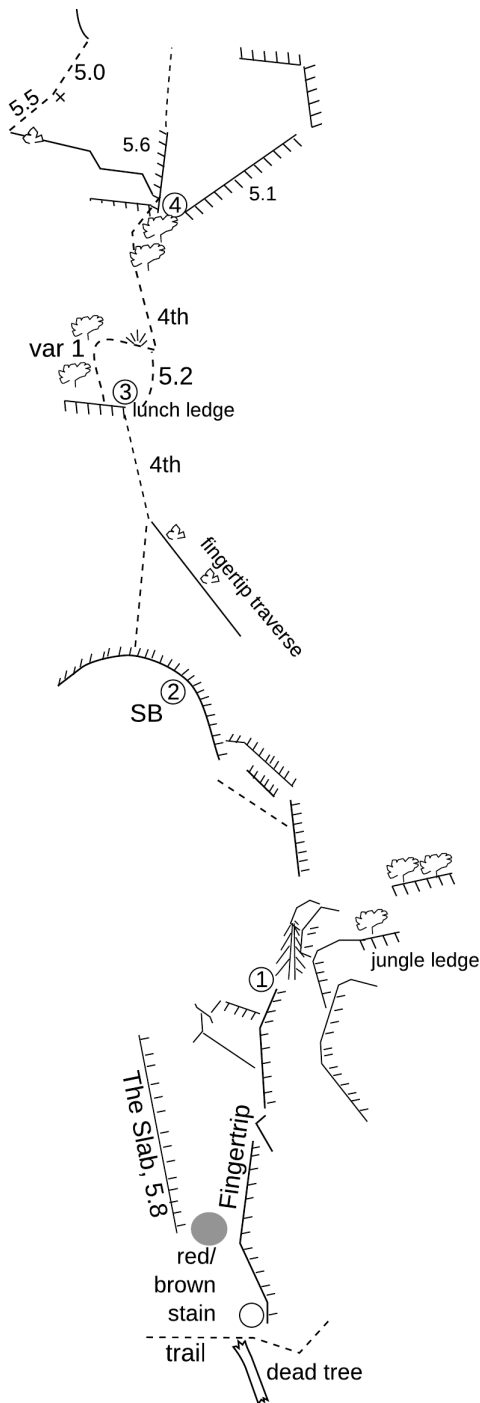
Var 1: Head right into a 5.1 gully, then turn left at an overhang.

Var 2: Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Fingertrip (5.7)



A Tahquitz classic, this climb was the original standard for 5.7 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. Two and a half pitches of sustained 5.7 are followed by two and a half pitches of easier climbing. The more difficult pitches offer sufficient protection, and any fall is likely to be a clean fall. Pro to 2". FA Chuck Wilts, Don Gillespie, and Jerry Rosenblatt, 1946.

Hike up to Lunch Rock and then head to the right along the trail. Just before a steep uphill section of the trail, you will see a large dead tree, lying toe-up on the right, with its bark stripped off. (The tree died in 2015/2016. Guidebooks describe the live tree as a landmark.) This is the start of the climb. A red stain on the rock is another landmark. Don't confuse the start of this climb with the much more difficult overhanging layback to the left of the red stain, which is The Slab 5.8.

P1. Layback and stem up a left-facing dihedral. Near the top, it becomes easier to head off to the left along a 0.75" crack, then traverse back to the right on a ledge. 5.7, 55 m.

P2. Head up from the belay, then traverse left on a face and step around a corner into the arch. Underclinging the arch (this being the source of the climb's name). Hanging belay. 5.7, ~ 45 m.

P3. Escape through the weak point in the overhang at the apex of the arch, 5.7. Continue to a large, low-lying tree at the top of Fingertip Traverse's namesake feature, and then up 4th class climbing to Lunch Ledge.

P4. Climb up around a corner to the right and head up (5.2). Continue up fourth-class terrain.

Var 1: Climb up from the middle/left of the ledge, surmounting all the steps before traversing right. This variation creates problems with rope drag, especially if linking pitches 4 and 5. Avoiding rope drag may require back-cleaning or not placing protection. 4th class

P5. Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-0.5" cams. (Do not follow the ramp lower down.) A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

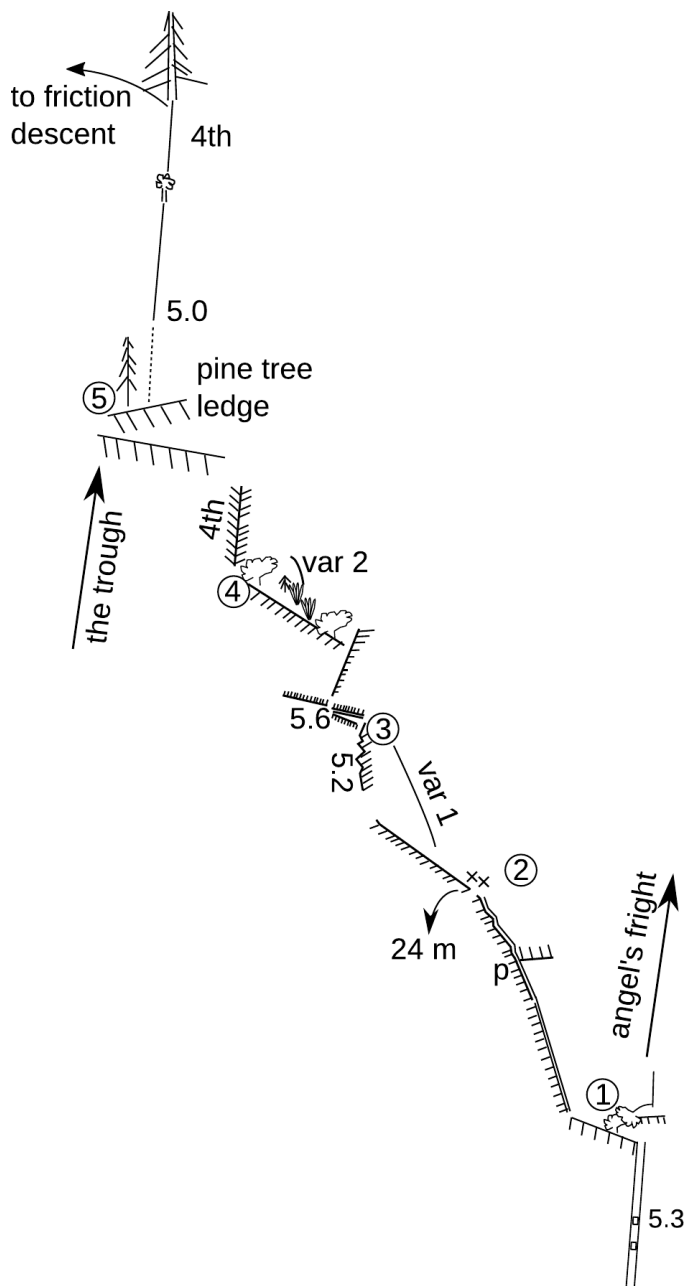
Var 1: Head right into a 5.1 gully, then turn left at an overhang.

Var 2: Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

The Frightful Variation of the Trough (5.4)



This is not really a variation of The Trough — all they have in common is the final pitch. Although it could theoretically be climbed in far fewer pitches, breaking it up helps because of brush and rope drag. This climb was the original definition of 5.2 in the Yosemite Decimal System, to be compared with The Trough, which was the standard for 5.0. The start is almost directly above Lunch Rock. Pro to 2". FA Chuck Wilts and Jim Gorin, 1944.

P1. The climb starts with the initial chimney section of Angel's Fright. On the right wall of the chimney is a crack that starts as wide hands and then becomes narrower. The start is made easier by trusting the firmly lodged first chockstone. This pitch basically climbs like a crack, with the left wall of the chimney providing some helpful opportunities for extra friction but also adding some awkwardness. Strenuous but straightforward to climb and protect. 5.3

P2. Traverse a big ledge to another chimney, this one filled with flakes up to the size of a big tabletop. Carefully consider holds and gear placements, since some of the flakes may be loose. A hand/finger crack runs up the back of the chimney, but big holds make it unnecessary to use crack technique to get up the steep part. 5.2

P3. Traverse left and then climb a staircase/dihedral. 5.2

Var 1: Go up immediately from the belay. I haven't tried this variation. Vogel calls it 5.6

P4. Traverse left along an undercling and then make a crux 5.6 move up through a gap between a pair of overlaps. Bush-whack across a ledge. Easy climbing except for the crux.

P5. Continue to pine tree ledge. 4th class

Var 2: Climb a flaring crack from the right side of the brushy ledge, then traverse left across slab. 5.7

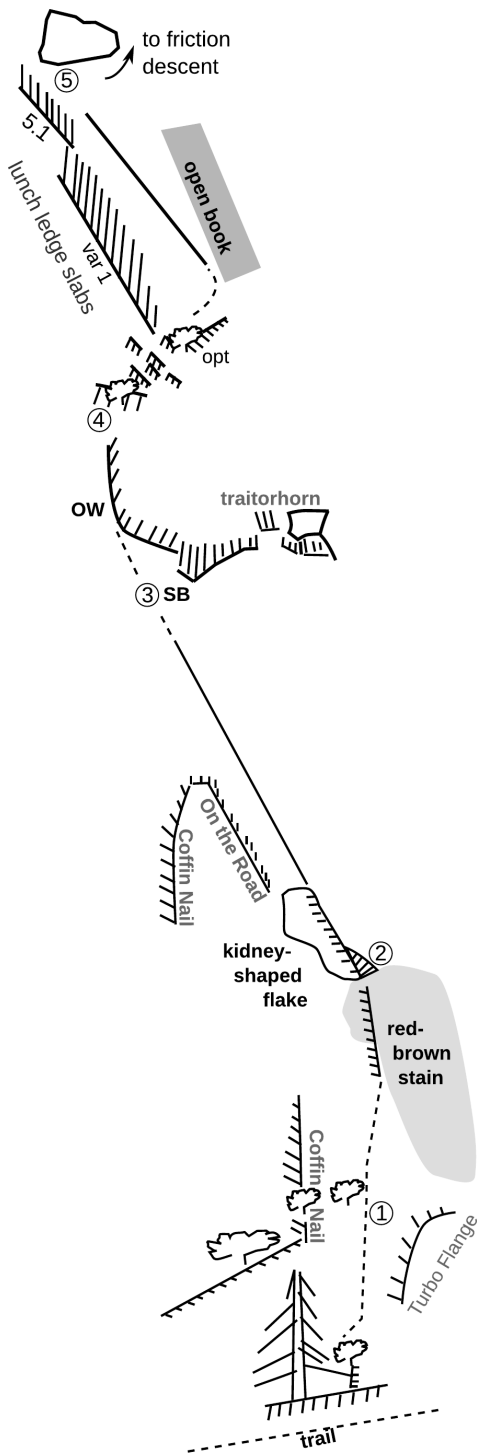
P6. Climb a face a couple of feet to the right of the pine tree, aiming for the small oak tree that is visible against the sky. It's difficult to find gear placements here that aren't cracks behind flakes, but it is possible to sling a series of tiny trees. The slope moderates and turns into a gully. Beyond the oak tree is a short section of easy climbing which ends at a huge pine tree. 5.5 meters, 5.0 and 4th.

From the pine tree, climb up class 3 slab to the left.

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Jensen's Jaunt (5.6)



The three middle pitches offer sustained climbing at the grade, punctuated with some moves harder than people today expect on a 5.6. The hard moves are all well protected. Grade inflation has caused guidebooks to lump together some much easier climbs such as Angel's Fright and Left Ski Track into the same grade with this climb. The bottom pitches are shared with Traitorhorn, the final ones with Coffin Nail and On the Road. Pro to 4". FA Carl Jensen, Jim Smith, and Don McDonald, 1938. Chuck Wilts's guidebook says that the route was first climbed because someone fell off of the Traitorhorn route and decided to go around rather than reattempting the horn.

From Lunch Rock, head around to the foot of the southwest end of the rock. The start of the climb lies in the general area to the right of Fingertip Traverse and to the left of the gigantic right-facing dihedral of Open Book. More nearby are two short right-facing walls at about the same height as the first belay. One of these walls is to the left (first belay of Coffin Nail) and one to the right (start of Turbo Flange). From the trail, it is easy to identify the red-brown stain, the kidney-shaped flake, and the imposing overhangs of Traitorhorn, the latter seeming more prominent and higher up than they actually are. Starting from the trail a little to the left of the route, scramble up to a start at a wooded ledge.

P1. Climb through an oak tree and then traverse easy terrain to a belay near the rightmost of several trees. 4th class, 20 m

P2. Climb a thin/balancey face with a cruxy spot 10' above the tree. Head up with the goal of getting on top of the right-facing dihedral formed by the top edge of the kidney-shaped flake. Semi-hanging belay at a cramped alcove. Belaying from low down in the alcove makes it easier for the leader to get going on the next pitch. P2 and P3 can be linked up if desired. 5.6

P3. Climb a crack that leads up and left, narrowing from fists to hands. The first moves out of the alcove are strenuous. These are followed by an easier stretch, then a steeper section. Continue to the lower left corner of the Traitorhorn overhangs. Hanging belay (small gear) on a spacious slope. 5.6

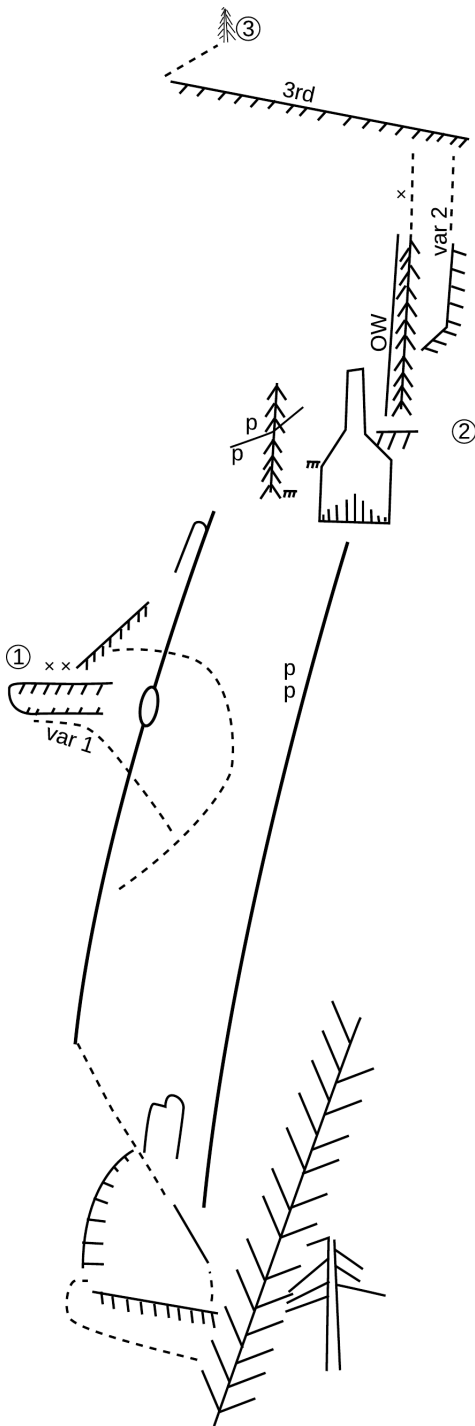
P4. Move up and around to the left, to an attention-getting step-around move, which is made easier by taking a step down. The move can be protected with small gear. After the step-around comes an awkward crux move in order to get your right foot into a crack, with solid hands but a sketchy left foot. The initial position is sort of like the Winnie the Pooh story where Pooh gets his head stuck in Rabbit's burrow. (Leaders under 5'6" will have to scooch up to the hold.) This move can also be protected. Follow the crack, which immediately widens and becomes off width. Large cams, including a 4" cam, will be helpful. The climbing soon becomes easier, leading to a big, comfy, shady belay ledge at a mountain mahogany. 5.6

P5. This pitch involves escaping and surmounting the big left-facing dihedral by going around to the right and getting up onto a ramp of slab that separates the area above Lunch Ledge from Open Book. Climb class 4 blocks to an optional belay, then traverse all the way right to the arete above Open Book. A white tricam in the right orientation can be made to fit in a tiny pin scar along the way, providing at least psychological pro. Run-out 5.0 slab climbing along the arete leads toward a crack. A single 5.5 move is required in order to reach the crack and place gear (0.75-2" cam). Continue up a low-angle hand and fist crack, 5.0. If you don't use the optional belay, rope drag is likely to be a problem. 55 m

Var 1: Climb the dihedral and then insert into the 5.1 gutter above Lunch Ledge. I haven't tried this variation. Gaines calls it 5.7.

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Left Ski Track (5.5)



A short climb with steep face climbing on juggy holds. The climb nominally follows the left-hand member of an obvious pair of curving, parallel cracks on the south face. Despite the name, the climb doesn't actually stay very faithfully in the left ski track crack. This warm, south-facing route is a good moderate climb to do in early or late season. Pro to 4". Bring an absurd number of double-length slings, both for slinging natural protection and because the first pitch wanders left and right. FA Chuck Wilts and Ray Van Aken, 1947.

From Lunch Rock, take the use trail around the west end of the rock. Go past the huge dihedral of Open Book. Identify the big pine tree that is the start of the climb, and head up class 3 slabs to get to it.

In the event that you need to retreat from the top of pitch 1, the information I've seen suggests that it is possible to rappel with a 60 m rope, but this may not get you all the way down to the most secure terrain.

P1. This is the super fun pitch, but the beginning and end require the leader to look around carefully for pro.

From the tree, traverse left across slab under a ledge that provides secure hands. Come back to the right along the ledge. From here the goal is to insert into the left ski track, while locating the scarce pro; a shallow diagonal crack has one placement that works with a pink tricam. The cruxy move into the crack can also be protected with a black tricam before the move and possibly a small cam in one of the pin scars on the other side.

The middle section of the pitch is fun and easy to protect. Head up the crack and then move right when that becomes the obviously easier thing to do.

Near the top of this pitch, the challenge is to find some appropriate pro for the traverse left to the anchor. You may be able to find a placement for a 3" cam in a pocket, or sling a horn. The easiest route to the anchor passes above an unattached death block lodged in the left ski track. Placing pro behind the death block would be easy and stupid, but gently resting some body weight on it seems to be OK. A 4" cam works to protect the move onto the sloping flake that leads down to the anchor.

Var 1: Move left under the death block and undercling the ledge under the anchors. This seems to be traditionally considered the “real” finish of the pitch. The moves are considerably harder, and I haven’t figured out any way to protect against a long pendulum swing. 5.6

P2. Move back up the diagonal flake and get back in the left ski track. During some of this section of the pitch, the feet are poor, but the hands are good. There is a finger of rock that I think is solidly attached at the bottom, and at the top of this finger it's necessary to pull hard on it to get up. The crack disappears, and you approach a series of two aretes that you need to step around. The first arete is marked visually by a shallow diagonal crack at head level. The second looks like a wine bottle or a cello.

The step around the first arete is difficult for the grade, and the leader should take care to protect this move for the follower (see more below). After initially committing to this balancey no-hands move, there is a second committing move needed in order to complete the step-around. After doing the first part, feel around with your right hand for helpful thin holds at knee level. Completing these moves leads to a tiny sloping ledge, and then you can step up to a second, more secure tiny ledge, which is a little pedestal. From this stance, reach back and place more pro for the follower; a 0.5" cam (purple camalot) can be placed high up.

You are now at the shoulders of the “wine bottle” arete. Step around to a big as and a couple of large SLCDs are helpful for building this anchor.

belay ledge behind the right shoulder. Tricams and a couple of large SLCDs are helpful for building this anchor.

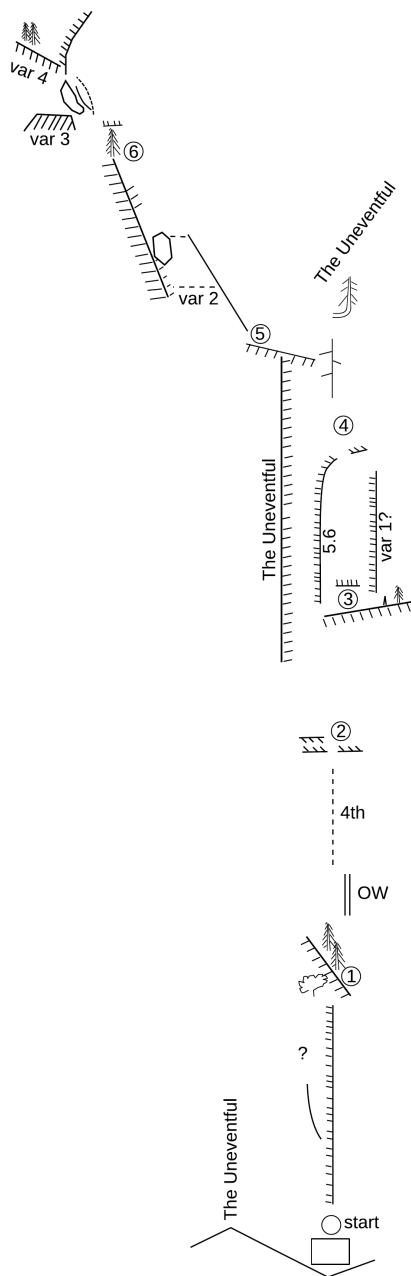
P3. Above the belay is an arete with an off-width crack to its left. Climb the arete and place pro in the crack. The arete ends at some slabs, where there is a bolt. Two cruxy friction moves going past the bolt are difficult for the grade. Follow a long third-class ledge to the left, then top out at a small pine tree.

Var 2: Climb the arete until an easy opportunity arises to move right. Reach the ledge by climbing two small parallel cracks. I haven't tried this variation.

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

North Buttress (5.5)



Warning: I've only done pitches 1-5 once. Because the climb goes up a ridge, it's somewhat nondescript, and it's likely that there are easier ways to do many of these pitches than the ways we found.

This route crosses The Uneventful near the top, and many climbers do the lower pitches of The Uneventful but then finish using the final pitches of North Buttress, which are easier. Most of the climbing is about 5.3, but there are a few harder moves mixed in. Gear to 3". Two #1 and one #2 micro nuts. FA R. Smith and Don Wilson, 1952.

Approach: The North Buttress lies in between the Maiden Buttress and the Northeast Buttress. Immediately to the left are the Larks, and a clear visual landmark from the trail is the huge gendarme that lies at the top of the Larks. A gully, the start of The Uneventful, splits the buttress at the bottom into two sub-buttresses. The climb starts at the base of the right-hand one. To reach the first belay in one rope length, it's necessary to start on top of a boulder.

P1. Climb a right-facing dihedral to a long, sloping ledge/gully with several trees in it. At a crux, the only protection I was able to devise was by equalizing several #1 and #2 micro nuts. Below this point, a crack branches off to the left and offers easier climbing, but I don't know whether it continues to go at the grade all the way to the belay. 60 m to the lower pine tree. 5.5 except for the crux.

P2. An off-width crack coming up from the belay was a little awkward and strenuous, and it's likely that the climbing to the left of it would be easier. Higher up, this pitch becomes 4th class. 60 m from the lower pine tree.

P3. Continue to a big ledge with a small pine tree and a stump festooned with slings.

P4. Climb the left of the two dihedrals. Beware of some flakes that may be loose. Exit the overhang through a notch. 5.6, 30 m.

Var 1: Vogel and Gaines seem to suggest climbing the right-hand dihedral, aiming for a second notch. I haven't tried this variation. A blank section near the bottom looked like it might not offer protection or might not go at the grade.

P5. Move the belay to the left end of the ledge.

P6. Climb up and left through blocky terrain along the obvious weakness, the lower of two diagonal cracks. Traverse left at the obvious opportune point, to a little saddle. Downclimb slightly to insert into the dihedral; or, for more spice, head up a thin fingertip traverse (5.6), which can be protected with a small cam. Climb to a pine tree nestled in an alcove containing a cave. 5.5, 60 m

Var 2: Climb higher than the "J" tree, place protection, and then come back down and traverse the slab at about the same height as the "J" tree, where black knobs are available for hands and feet. A no-hands crux cannot be protected adequately, especially for the follower, without preparing by placing the pro higher up. 5.7

P7. Escape the alcove by climbing up and left, then continue upward through a difficult section to the right of a flake (5.6). (Don't climb the chimney directly behind the flake.) Continue up a right-facing dihedral, then over a short wall. 5.5 m.

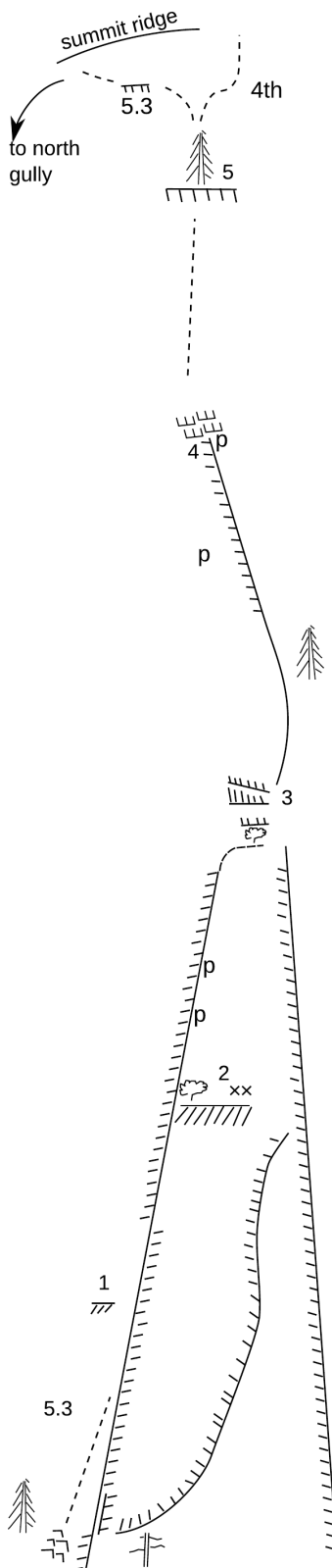
Var 3: Before the flake, head left to a black and white mottled slab, with underclings and protection available along its rim. Downclimb into the right-hand exit chute of the Larks. 5.7.

Var 4: After the flake, traverse left along a ledge toward a pair of trees. Continue traversing until you emerge onto the top of the rock. 4th class after the flake.

Descent: Descend via the north gully (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Northeast Face, East Variation (5.6)



This is a fun route that is easily protected and can be climbed on a Saturday morning without being in a conga line. A possible negative is that there is a certain sameness to a lot of the climbing on pitches 2-4.

This climb is in the middle of the northeast face, to the left of the Larks and to the right of El Grandote. A prominent inverted “Y” is formed by right-facing dihedrals, and this variation heads up its left fork. Approach via the North Side Trail. The “Y” is difficult to see through the trees from the trail, but the north face lies below the prominent gendarme at the top of the Larks, and this climb is on the left side of that face. Sustained 5.5-5.6 climbing on pitches 2 through 5. Pro to 3”, with a 4” cam repeatedly coming in handy. FA Don Wilson and Royal Robbins, 1954.

P1. Climb flakes to the left of the dihedral, enter the left-facing part of the dihedral briefly, and belay at a small ledge. Ignore the bolts to the right, which are for the slab climb Grace Slick. 60 m, 5.3.

P2. Continue up the crack. Insert into the main right-facing part of the dihedral and climb a wide (knee jam) crack. End at a bolted anchor on a huge ledge. 5.5

P3. Continue up the dihedral, toeing in to a thin crack at the corner, to a series of overlaps at the crotch of the “Y.” Traverse past a small tree, then move up through 5.6 broken terrain to a belay. The crux of the climb is at the end of this pitch and the beginning of the next one. Vogel and Gaines describe a variation that swings around farther to the right, but I’ve heard it’s harder. Higher up is an alternative belay at a tree around a corner to the right, but this is a poor choice due to rope drag.

P4. Head up the stem of the “Y” toward overhangs. Stay in the dihedral, and don’t be lured off route by the fixed piton above and to the left. Belay as close as possible to the overhangs in order to complete the following pitch with a 60 meter rope. A fixed pin can be backed up with 3” or 4” cams.

P5. Pull through gaps in a set of steep blocks and irregular overhangs. The moves are strenuous but easily protected, with big holds. After this the climbing gets much easier for the rest of the route. Head for a shady belay at a pine tree on a big ledge. 60 m

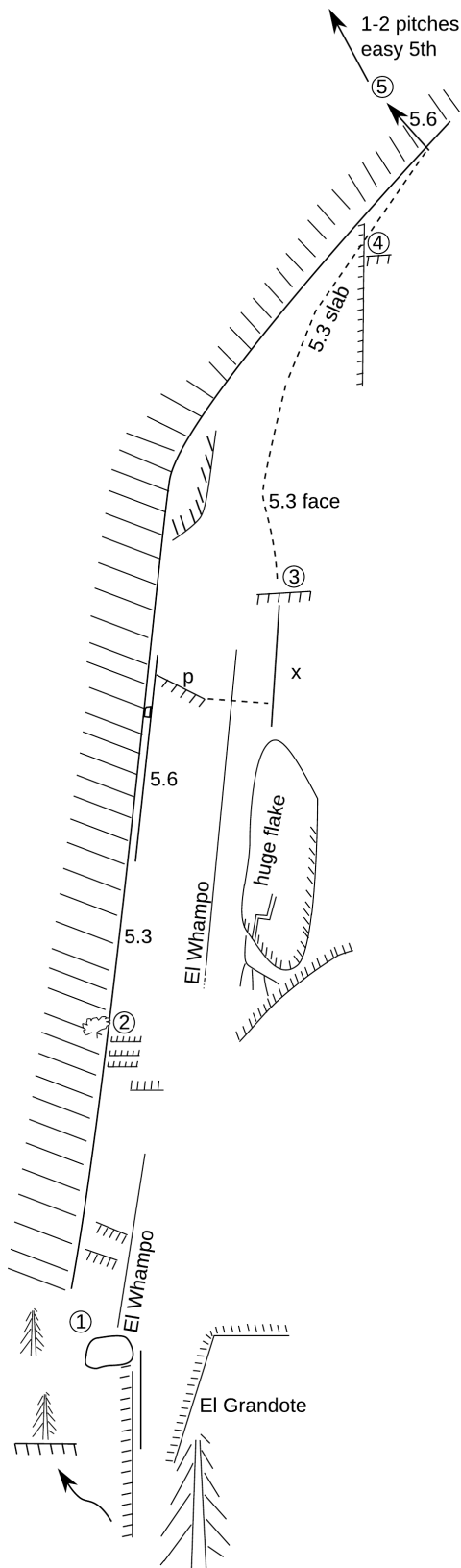
P6. Continue to the right up 4th class terrain to the summit ridge, or traverse a delicate 5.3 ledge to the left for more direct insertion into the north gully.

Descent: Descend via the north gully (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

Northeast Farce (5.6 PG13)

Warning: I haven't done P2.



It would fun if this climb was a safe, mellow 5.3, a no-stress vertical hike, as suggested by the name and the guidebook ratings. Unfortunately that isn't quite what it is, because P3 is more like 5.6 by modern standards, and it lacks appropriate pro. For a chill day on the rock, I would suggest substituting the El Whampo crack for P3 — the climbing is comparable in difficulty, and it has pro.

The route is located on the extreme left corner of the northeast face, at a gigantic right-facing dihedral that dominates this entire area of the rock. This dihedral can be distinguished from the Northeast Rib dihedral to its left because the Northeast Farce dihedral is bigger, has a 6-foot-diameter tree near its base, and has the distinctive El Grandote overhang to its right. FA Don Wilson and Jerry Gallwas, 1954. Gear to 3".

P1. Start up a small right-facing dihedral to the left of the El Grandote arch. Exit early to the left in order to get out from under a house-sized boulder looming above. Continue past two pine trees, to a ledge on top of the boulder. Class 4.

P2. Climb the humongous dihedral to a belay at a small forked deciduous tree with rap rings. The tree is pretty small and should be backed up with gear if it is to be used as a belay anchor.

P3. Continue up the dihedral. Higher up, the climbing becomes much more strenuous, 5.6, turning into more of an off-width crack with sloper holds. A chockstone festooned with old, UV-damaged slings seems unfortunately to be too deeply wedged and buried now to allow the slings to be replaced. Continue to the ledge, which is the first highly prominent one visible above the belay. A 3" or 4" cam can be placed before starting across the ledge. Half-way across the ledge is an old fixed pin. After the ledge fades out, continue a short distance across 5.5 slab to the El Whampo crack, then across a little more slab, 5.6, to the big crack that forms the continuation of Northeast Farce. Between the fixed pin and the El Whampo crack, no other protection is available, and if the old, rusty pin were to fail, the result would be a long 90-degree pendulum fall back into the dihedral.

P4. Head up toward the roof. The easier climbing and better pro are found by veering a little to the left and climbing 5.3 face, where big holds are available on a series of flakes. As you near the roof, turn right and begin traversing along a slab that is made more secure by the availability of underclings. A comfy belay is available at a little nook inside a dihedral (the top of El Dorado?).

P5. Continue traversing and look for a weak spot at which to exit up through the roof. 5.6.

Var 1: Exit up and left from the belay, 5.7. Continue either to the right on the layback that is part of El Whampo (5.7), or up a gully to the left for easier climbing. (I haven't tried the latter.)

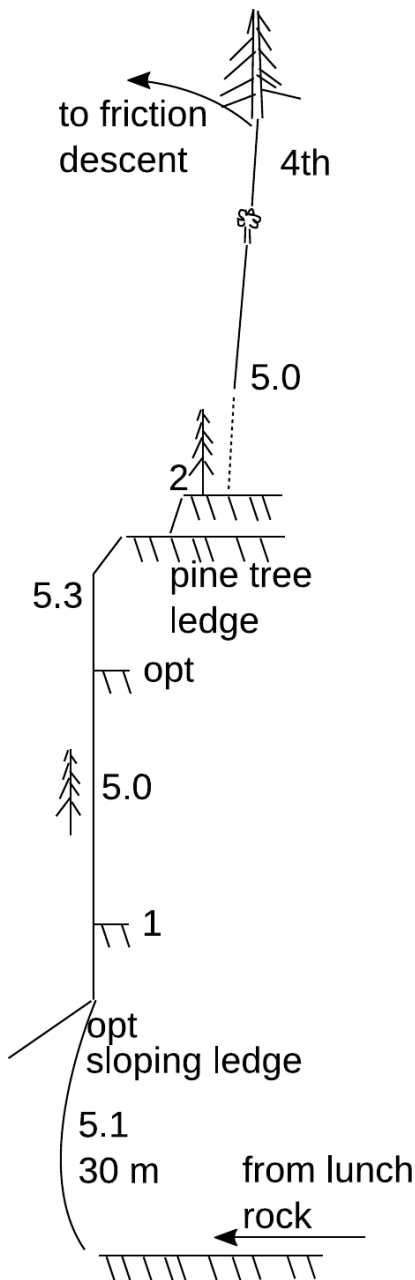
P6. Climb easy 5th class terrain to a big, comfy belay at a short, squat pine tree.

P7. Two exits present themselves, and either will work. On the left is a fourth-class gully that leads to a short, exposed easy 5th class section to get around a corner. The exit on the right consists of class 4 ledges.

Descent: Descend via the north gully (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

The Trough (5.3)



This climb was originally used as a class 4 downclimb route off of Tahquitz. Later it served as the original definition of 5.0 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale, and with continuing grade inflation it has now come to be rated about 5.3. 3-5 pitches. Gear to 3", slings for trees. Singles of cams are enough. FA Jim Smith, Bob Brinton, and Z. Jasitas, 1936.

Approach: From the bottom end of the parking area at Humber Park, take the Ernie Maxwell trail and then turn left at the signpost for the climber's trail. Climb to Lunch Rock. Continue past Lunch Rock to the foot of Tahquitz Rock. Turn left, and crawl up through a tunnel behind a tree. Follow the ledge until it ends.

P1. Follow a crack up and around a corner to the left. Fingers and friction initially, then off-width. Pass through a large, sloping, triangular ledge and insert into the obvious trough. Belay at a small ledge on the right. 45 m

P2. Continue up the trough. Near the top is more difficult climbing including smearing and squeezing through a narrow gap. At the top, the trough steepens and ends. Move up and over to the right here, onto Pine Tree Ledge. 45 m.

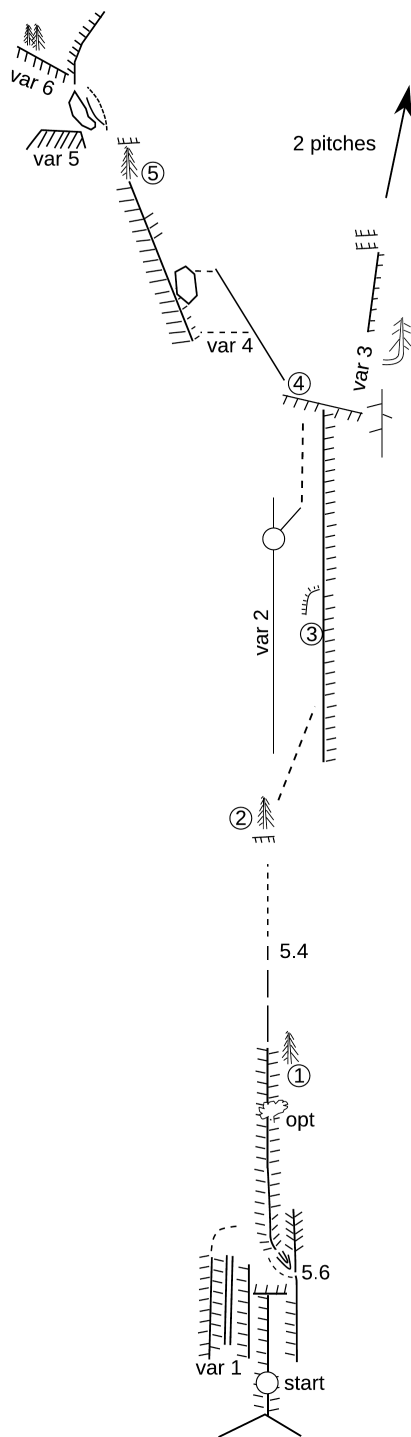
P3. Climb a face a couple of feet to the right of the pine tree, aiming for the small oak tree that is visible against the sky. It's difficult to find gear placements here that aren't cracks behind flakes, but it is possible to sling a series of tiny trees. The slope moderates and turns into a gully. Beyond the oak tree is a short section of easy climbing which ends at a huge pine tree. 55 meters, 5.0 and 4th.

From the pine tree, climb up class 3 slab to the left.

Descent: Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

The Uneventful (5.6)



Warning: I haven't done the right-hand variation at the end.

Some of the belay ledges on this climb are littered with loose rock. Avoid climbing this route below another party. Six to seven pitches of climbing, most of it 5.4 to 5.6. Gear to 4". FA Harry Daley, Yvon Chouinard, C. Butler, and Dan Doody 1959.

Approach: The Uneventful lies on the North Buttress, which is the one in between the Maiden Buttress and the Northeast Buttress. Immediately to the left are the Larks, and a clear visual landmark from the trail is the huge gendarme that lies at the top of the Larks. A gully splits the North Buttress in two at the bottom, and the Uneventful starts in this gully, at a deep, shady alcove with azaleas growing in it. To complete P1 with a 60 m rope, it's necessary to scramble up some class 3 terrain to get higher in the gully.

P1. Above the start, the gully immediately splits into three forks. The middle fork is blocked by a steep headwall. Head up the right-hand fork, which curves around behind the headwall. A crux is formed by an overhang consisting of two tongue-shaped flakes. I couldn't tell whether the bottom tongue was firmly wedged under the top one or if it was attached to anything, so it seemed safer to detour left rather than powering through the overhang. Continue up the gully as the climbing gets a little easier, and finish at a comfy belay at a huge, truncated pine tree. 5.6, 60 m

Var 1: Detour left to a right-facing chimney underneath an arete. Climb the chimney, gain the crest of the arete, continue up to a small dead log, and then make a committing friction move to get back in the dihedral. 5.6

P2. The gully starts to dissipate, and the climbing gets easier. 5.4, 60 m

P3. Head diagonally toward a 10 foot tall, 80 meter long, left-facing dihedral. After inserting into the dihedral, continue to a decent semi-hanging belay. 5.6, 55 m

Var 2: An obvious alternative line is a shallow crack paralleling the dihedral. As the crack becomes less defined, the climbing becomes more difficult and leads out onto the steep face above the Larks. A decent belay spot is available after about 40-50 m. (Anchor with a 2" cam.) From the belay, a crack and flake system provides an exit to the right. Beware of possibly loose flakes. 5.8

P4. Climb a difficult 20 m section starting with an overhanging arch. For pro at the arch, an old fixed pin in the wall can be backed up with a small cam (black tricam) in the overhang itself. Continue up the dihedral to a big ledge near two big, distinctive trees: one dead and one shaped like a "J." 5.6, 35 m

P5. This is traditionally considered to be the end of the North Buttress route. Start from the left end of the ledge to avoid running out of rope. Climb up and left through blocky terrain along the obvious weakness, the lower of two diagonal cracks. Traverse left at the obvious opportune point, to a little saddle. Downclimb slightly to insert into the dihedral; or, for more spice, head up a thin fingertip traverse (5.6), which can be protected with a small cam. (Wilts and Vogel-Gaines describe a 5.7 traverse lower down, at the same height as the "J" tree. I attempted this and turned back at a poorly protected move that seemed much harder than 5.7.) Climb to a pine tree nestled in an alcove containing a cave. 5.5, 60 m

Var 3: This is the standard route as described by Wilts's 1974 guidebook: "Directly above the upper ["J"] tree is an interesting 5.5 chimney which leads to easier pitches and the top of the rock." I haven't done this version, so the topo just shows the terrain that was visible to me from belay 4. Two good beta photos on Mountainproject are titled "Jog right to skip the hard dihedral" and "Starting the J tree pitch that looks intimidating." There is some helpful discussion below one of the photos. 5.7?

Var 4: Climb higher than the "J" tree, place protection, and then come back down and traverse the slab at about the same height as the "J" tree, where black knobs are available for hands and feet. A no-hands crux cannot be protected adequately, especially for the follower, without preparing by placing the pro higher up. 5.7

P6. Escape the alcove by climbing up and left, then continue upward through a difficult section to the right of a flake (5.6). (Don't climb the chimney directly behind the flake.) Continue up a right-facing dihedral, then over a short wall. 5.5 m.

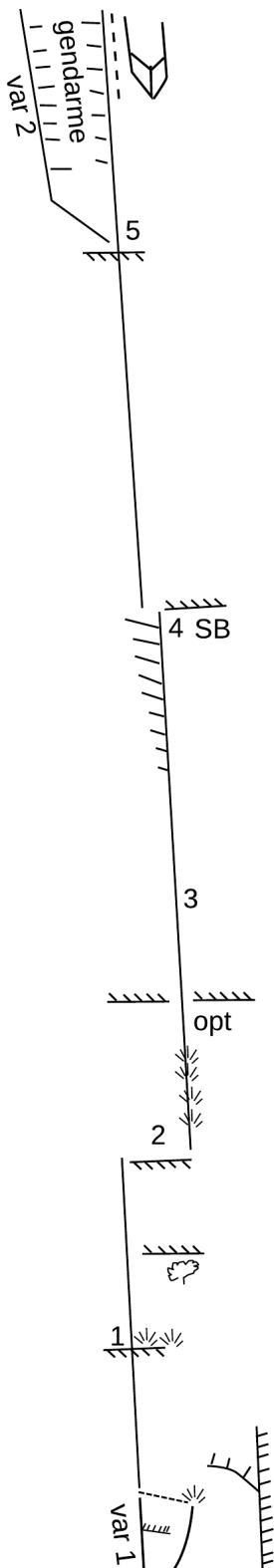
Var 5: Before the flake, head left to a black and white mottled slab, with underclings and protection available along its rim. Downclimb into the right-hand exit chute of the Larks. 5.7.

Var 6: After the flake, traverse left along a ledge toward a pair of trees. Continue traversing until you emerge onto the top of the rock. 4th class after the flake.

Descent: Descend via the north gully (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

West Lark (5.4)



A low-angle ascent up a series of obvious crack systems, with straightforward routefinding. The few harder moves are protectable. Pro to 2". Doubles of small cams are helpful on the later pitches. FA Roy Gorin, J. Hudson, William Dixon, and Ellen Wilts, 1954.

The first half of the climb is easily protected with nuts, but there is the constant hazard of falling and hitting a ledge. Pitches 4 and 5 have a lot of rounded, flaring cracks that don't take protection well, but there are no ledges, so a fall would be relatively inconsequential. Many of the belay ledges have baseball-sized loose rocks on them, so climbing underneath another party could be hazardous. The rock quality in general is fine, but not as stellar as some at Tahquitz, so don't trust holds without thinking.

This climb ends near the summit, so it's long, and climbing parties commonly take longer than expected to get up it and end up hiking out in the dark. The later pitches are just barely possible with a 60 m rope, and only if the belays are chosen as far up as possible.

The start lies at the extreme right side of the north face, just to the left of the north buttress. The gendarme near the top is the most visible landmark through the treetops. Approach via the North Side Trail. Either head straight up from the trail, approaching the base of the climb by threading your way between talus piles, or go all the way to the east side of the face and then take a side trail back to the west.

The start can be located by looking for the distinctive left-facing overlap and overhang on the right.

P1. Climb past an inconvenient bush and left a few feet across slab. Insert into a crack and head up. Don't climb the dihedral to the right. Protect against falls onto the numerous ledges. 30 m
Var 1: Start directly up the crack.

P2. Continue up similar climbing in the same crack, ending at a ledge on the right. ~ 30 m

P3. From the right side of the ledge, begin climbing a different crack, which has a lot of vegetation in it. Continue up through a gap in an overhang and belay above it. I think there are two ledges at which you can belay, and the higher one may be preferable because it gives you more options for placing belay 4 higher up. ~ 30 m

P4. Continue up 5.0 climbing with less abundant protection. A right-facing wall develops to the left. As you near an overhang, the climbing gets harder. Continue to a hanging belay. The belay needs to be as close as possible to the overhang if P5 is to be possible with a 60-meter rope, but good placements for a gear anchor are not plentiful. One spot about 20 feet below the overhang works with small cams (yellow and orange TCUs, possibly backed up with a tricam or purple or green camalot), but then the rope is not long enough to give freedom of movement at the next belay ledge. 50 m

P5. Escape the overhang by climbing the easy dihedral to the left. Up to a big ledge below the huge gendarme. Natural anchor on a questionable flake or gear anchor with cams. 5.0 climbing with scarce pro. 60 m

P6. Continue straight up, on the right side of the gendarme. To the right of the gendarme is its little sister, a rock shaped like the prow of a ship. Between them is a chimney. Climb the chimney, which is a surprisingly easy 5.2 and easy to protect. Escaping the chimney and then getting into the gully to the summit is more difficult, but also easy to protect.

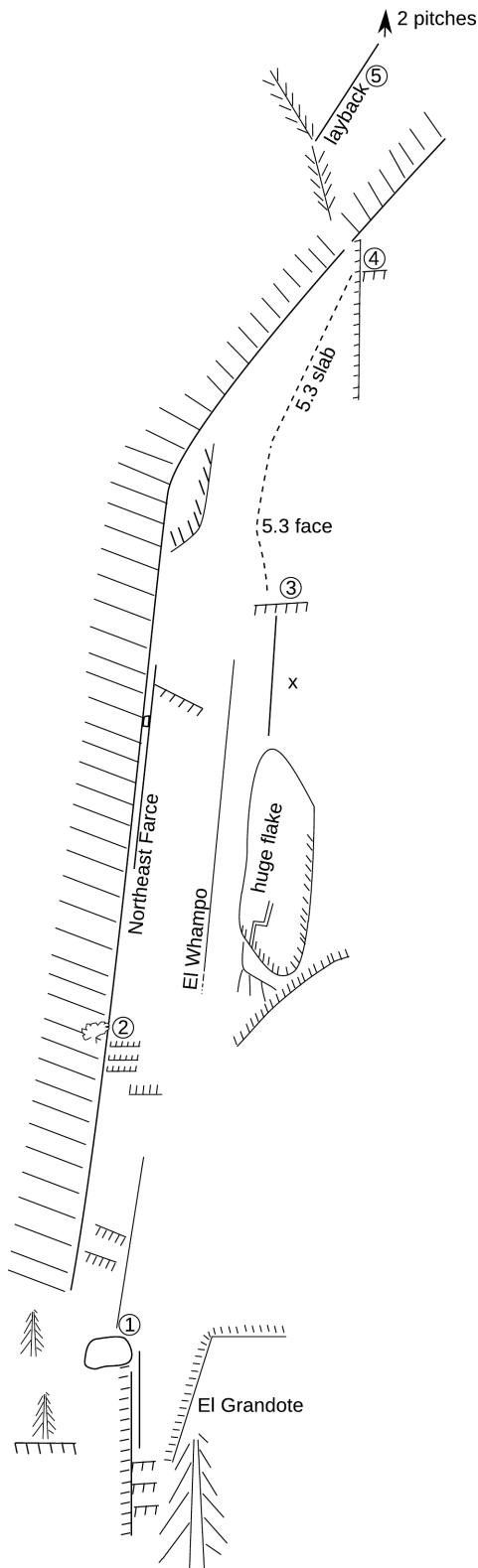
Var 2: Go to the left of the gendarme. Rope drag may be a problem, and the crux move may be difficult to protect without depending on bad rock.

Descent: Gain the summit ridge and head down left into the north gully descent route (p. 5), or insert into the gully more directly by scrambling.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

El Whampo (5.7)

Warning: I have only done this route once.



The climb starts at the base of the huge right-facing Northeast Farce dihedral, at the extreme left side of the northeast face. This dihedral can be distinguished from the Northeast Rib dihedral to its left because the Northeast Farce dihedral is bigger, has a 6-foot-diameter tree near its base, and has the distinctive El Grandote overhang to its right. Pro to 3". FA Richard Coats, Larry Reynolds, D. McLean, and D. Ross, 1964.

P1. Head up an easy 5th class gully to the left of the El Grandote Arch. If you want to combine pitches 1 and 2, you will need to start at the second or third of the ledges in the gully. A headwall is formed by a bus-sized boulder. Pass around the boulder to the right, and belay on top of it.

P2. Climb a thin crack and then move left into the dihedral at one of two ledges. The first ledge is easier. Follow the dihedral to a belay at a small forked deciduous tree with rap rings. The tree is pretty small and should be backed up with gear if it is to be used as a belay anchor.

P3. Traverse right across slab to a point below a long crack that runs along the left side of a huge flake. A difficult move on steep slab is required in order to reach the crack, which lacks definition at the very bottom, but soon becomes deep and fist-width. As you continue up the crack, it thins to finger width. Exit right (another difficult move) to reach a belay ledge.

The following is some helpful beta from Mountainproject users on the cruxy traverse at the beginning of the pitch: Roger Linfield: "traverses right to a crux finger jam move" Camron: "There are two variations . . . You can traverse down low from the belay station to the crack where you can get one piece in before you reach the crack or you can climb 10 feet up and then make the traverse to the crack (no pro)." The Gray Tradster: "you can get reasonable protection for the upper variation by climbing up about 15 ft and placing gear under the flake as far right as you can get a good piece. Then down climb to the white streak and traverse. After reaching the main crack either do not place until well above the traverse piece or down climb and clean so your second isn't facing a bone crushing swing."

P4. Head up toward the roof. The easier climbing and better pro are found by veering a little to the left and climbing 5.3 face, where big holds are available on a series of flakes. As you near the roof, turn right and begin traversing along a slab that is made more secure by the availability of underclings. A comfy belay is available at a little nook inside a dihedral (the top of El Dorado?). 5.3.

Var 1: Head more directly toward the belay, across slabs. 5.7 PG.

P5. Escape up and left through a gap in the roof above the belay, with a spicy move that is easily protected. Continue up a gully, which forks into a gully on the left and a right-facing dihedral to the right. Layback the dihedral.

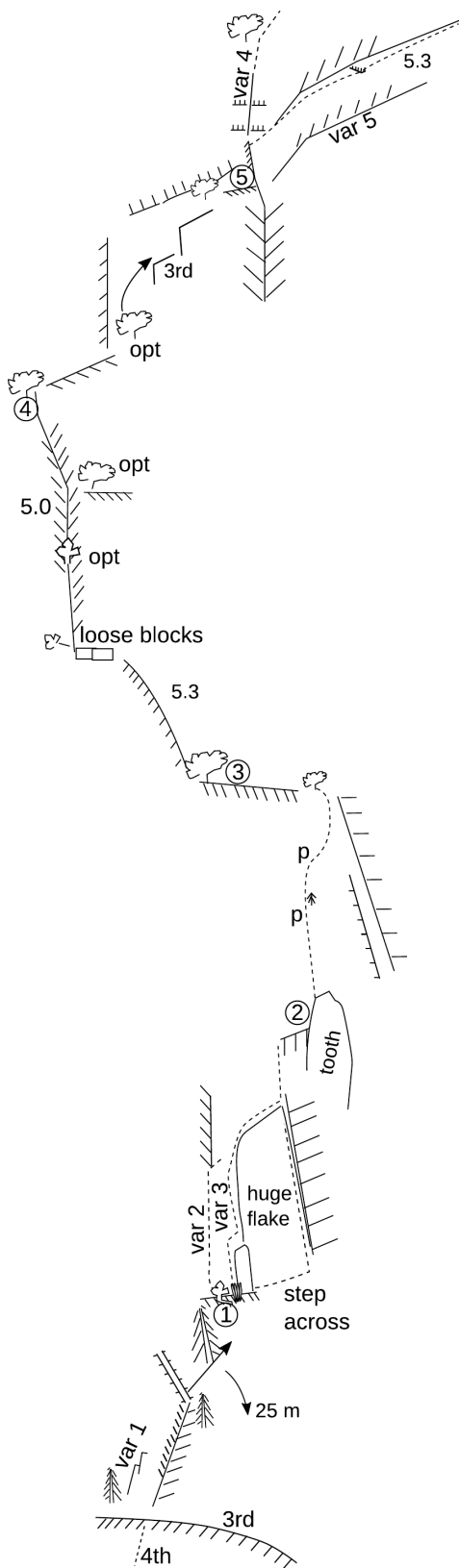
P6. Make your way across nondescript slab to a big, comfy belay at a short, squat pine tree.

P7. Two exits present themselves, and either will work. On the left is a fourth-class gully that leads to a short, exposed easy 5th class section to get around a corner. The exit on the right consists of class 4 ledges.

Descent: Descend via the north gully (p. 5).

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz

White Maiden's Walkway (5.4)



Warning: I haven't done var 5.

A Tahquitz classic. Difficult routefinding. This long route ends not far below the summit. Mostly 5.0 to 5.3, but a few 5.6-7 moves are required. Start from the left side of the Maiden Butte, which can be approached either from the North Side Trail or the Lunch Rock Trail. Pro to 3", or 4" for var 2 of P2. FA Jim Smith and Arthur Johnson, 1937.

The easiest final approach is from the right along a long class-3 ledge. Above the ledge is a steep 5-10' wall, which causes the initial moves of both variations of P1 to be 5.6. It's not possible to protect these initial moves well enough to prevent landing back on the ledge.

P1. The obvious way up is a gully with pine trees in it. The first move is difficult; step left first using a hidden fingertip hold for balance, then mantle up into the crack. After the first pine tree, enter a gutter heading up and to the left, but then immediately exit the gutter to the right to avoid getting the rope snagged in brush. Continue past a big pine tree and belay at a small tree.

Var 1: Start slightly to the left, closer to the highest tree in the crook of the buttress. Get onto a series of flakes, then move right into the same gully as the standard route. Same difficulty as the standard route.

P2. Traverse to the right, under branches and then over a saddle behind a boulder, and make an exposed step across into a gutter. This committing 5.7 move can be protected with a #3 TCU. Head up the gutter, which magically becomes 5.0 if you grope and find the invisible undercling crack. Watch for an exit to a large saddle on the right. A common mistake is to overshoot the saddle instead of exiting. 35 meters

Var 2: A clean straight-in hand and foot crack just left of the small tree. 5.7

Var 3: An unpleasant ragged fist- and off-width crack heading straight up from brush to the right of the belay. A fall near the start risks impalement on a dead tree. 5.6

P3. From the center of the saddle, head straight up toward a tiny Charlie Brown Christmas tree. Near the second fixed pin, you run out of easy ways up, the only apparent option being a very difficult mantling move up to a small sloper hold. Instead, grope for a series of excellent holds that allow you to easily move up and to the right. Come back to a ledge containing a big tree and a small tree. Place gear to route the rope so as to avoid damaging the small tree by dragging the rope over it. 5.4, 35 meters

P4. Climb 15 meters up a 5.3 flake/arete. As the flake levels out and disappears, your left hand lands on a large, loose conch-shaped block, and there is a second block farther to the left. Walk across the two blocks and make a committing step around a corner to a stemming stance underneath a small tree. The stance can be stabilized with a hand in a finger-width crack on the right. Get on top of the tree and then head up a 5.0 gully. 58 meters

P5. Traverse right toward another tree, but head upward before it into a right-facing dihedral. Before getting too close to the ceiling, go back to traversing along 3rd-class ledges and flakes. Gear belay in a one-inch crack in a right-facing dihedral in the big gully. Class 3.

P6. For the standard 5.3 finish, head 10 feet up the one-inch crack, then exit into a cave formed by a claustrophobic overhang. Escape the cave by moving out onto a slab, approaching a wall that gets in the way. Move all the way out to the rightmost side of the wall and then mantle up. Locate a bomber hold and a side-pull to make the mantling moves more positive.

Var 4: Head straight up through gaps in the overhangs above the belay. The crux is the awkward second gap, 5.8.

Descent: Either go down to the friction descent (p. 5) or go up and over the summit and come down the north gully.

Ben Crowell, github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz